

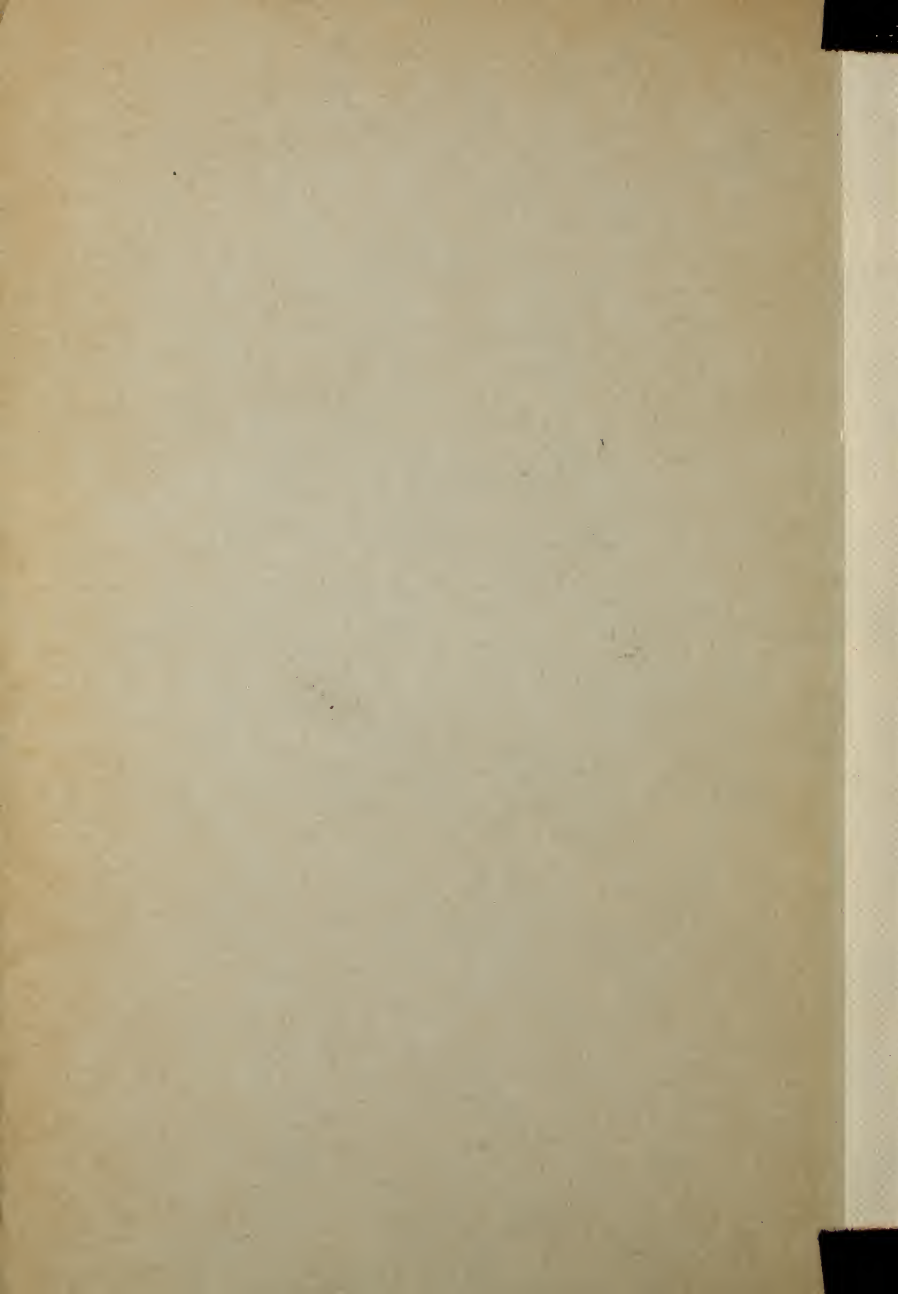
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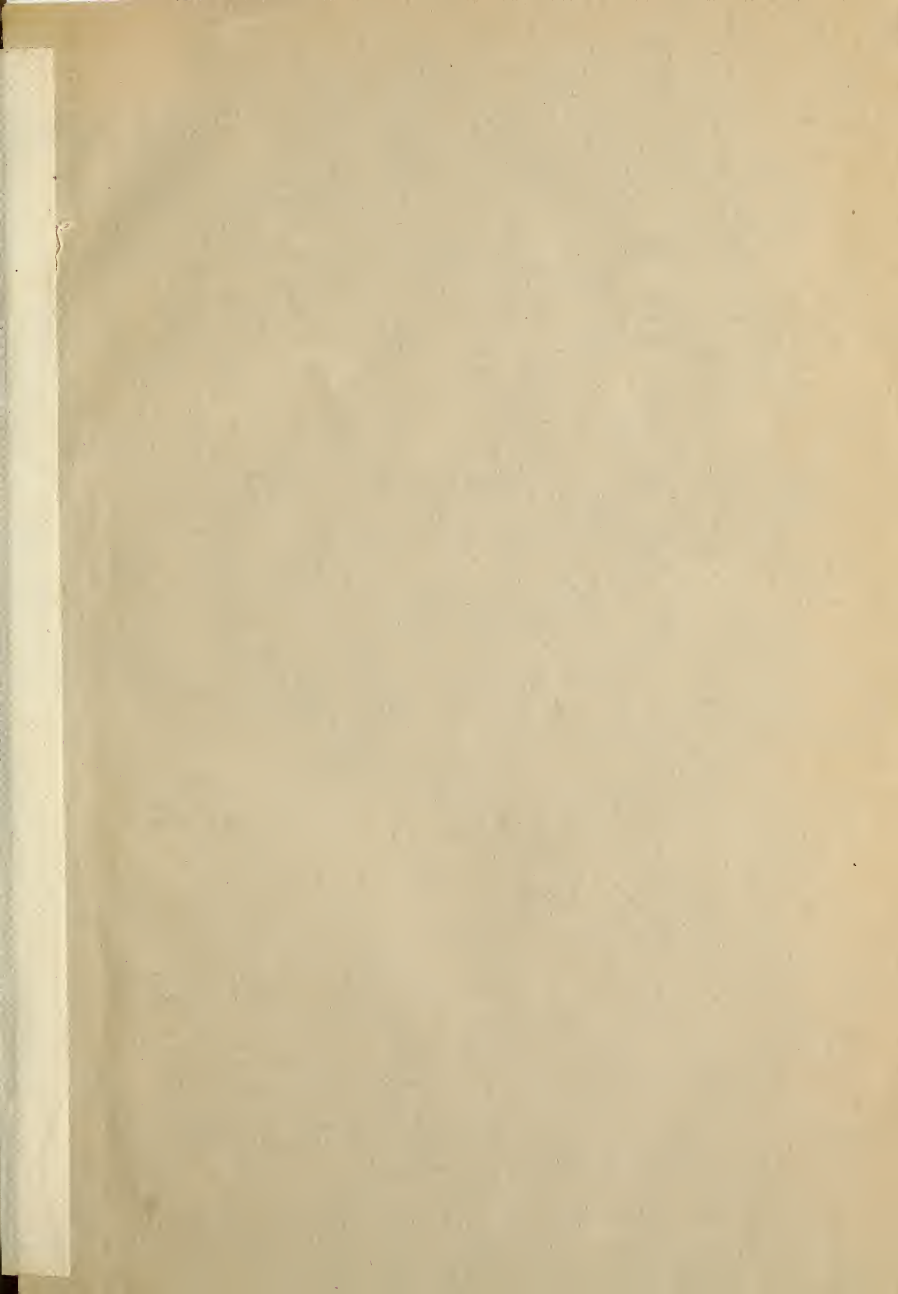
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A PLAN FOR BETTER RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE  
SOUTHERN METHODIST CHURCH.

By

J. L. Cuninggim








# A Plan for Better Religious Instruction in the Southern Methodist Church

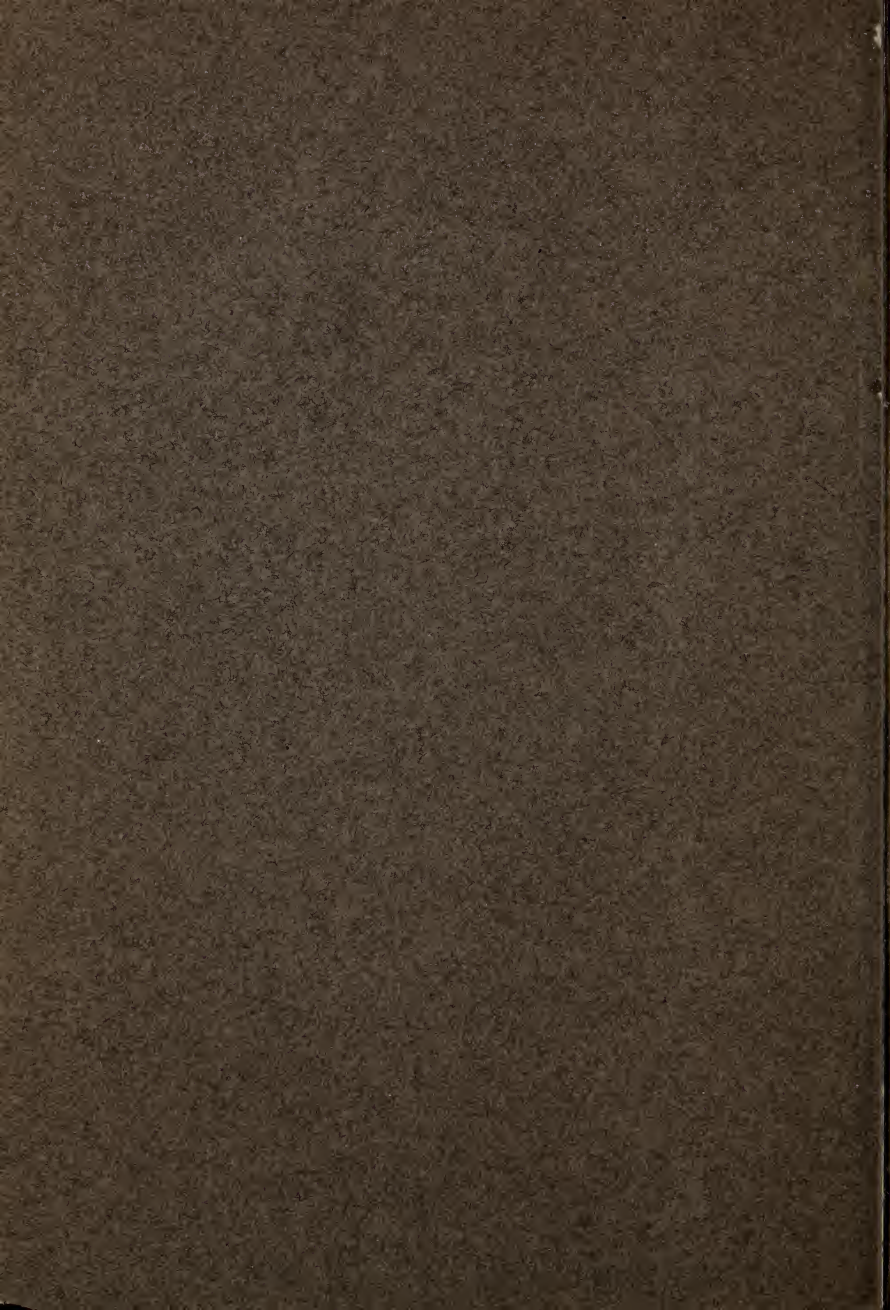
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# A PLAN

FOR

## BETTER RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

IN THE

SOUTHERN METHODIST CHURCH.

By

J. L. CUNINGGIM,

*Of the North Carolina Conference, M. E. Church, South.*

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## AN INTRODUCTORY WORD.

BY BISHOP O. P. FITZGERALD.

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I COMMEND this Essay to the consideration of our people on several grounds :

1. The subject is intrinsically important. To induce men and women to think and pray over it is therefore truly desirable.

2. This discussion is opportune. It is engaging the attention of some of the keenest intellects and most zealous workers in some of our largest cities and elsewhere in our country. It is to the front, and must be met.

3. The writer says good things on a subject to which he has given special study.

4. He says them in a good way. His argument is strong, his spirit earnest, and his style lucid.

Nashville, 1901.



## **A PLAN FOR BETTER RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE SOUTHERN METHODIST CHURCH.**

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### **I.**

THE Methodist Church has ever been filled with evangelistic zeal. Across the seas, over the mountains, through the wilderness, and into the plains, everywhere her apostles have gone to tell the story of Jesus and to win men to him. The Methodist mourners' bench and camp meeting have been potent factors in the lives of millions of men. These, and such as these, have wrought for the Methodist Church her wonderful success and won for her the admiration of the world.

But the question may reasonably be asked whether or not instruction has kept pace with evangelization. Has the Southern Methodist Church, to come nearer home, given as much thought to the careful instruction of her million and a half members as to bringing them into her fold? Has she succeeded as well in character-building as in conversion? Certainly she has planted her schools and colleges broadcast over the land, and nobly have they wrought; but they have reached only the few, and to them, as a matter of course, have given literature and science rather than the more specific truths of the Christian religion. The Church has had her classes and her class meetings, but has

ceased or all but ceased to have them. She has her Epworth League and various missionary and aid societies, but none of these has for its primary purpose systematic instruction in religious truth. In their purpose, as also in their methods of work, they are adapted to the advancement of certain Church activities, rather than to careful religious instruction. The greatest power the Church has possessed has been the pulpit with its stated Sabbath and mid-week services. But the pulpit has stood for evangelization rather than instruction. The primary purpose of the sermon is not so much to instruct the mind as to move the conscience and the will. A certain amount of instruction as a means to an end it must, of course, afford; but the method of the sermon, the limitation of time, the complex character of the audience, as well as fidelity to its own peculiar task, render it impossible for the pulpit to give the religious instruction the people need. The Church has her Sunday school devoted to this specific work, and a great work it has accomplished; and yet if we consider the great host of adults who do not come under the influence of the Sunday school, if we consider the limited range of Sunday school instruction, if we consider, too, the widespread ignorance of those who receive such training as the school can give, it becomes at once apparent that even here the needs have not been met. In fact, it may be said that, with all the agencies within the Church,

the careful instruction of the people has been by no means well supplied.

And what is the consequence of this fact? A large per cent of the membership are sadly ignorant of the great truths of Christ and the Christian religion. While the Church is not without a large number of intelligent, godly men and women, she has a multitude far greater, no doubt, much in need of careful instruction. How many there are who know next to nothing about the Bible! How many who have practically no grasp on the fundamental truths of the Christian religion! It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that there are so many who are wanting in largeness of life. Conversion, important and necessary as it is, must be followed by careful and thorough instruction, for it is only as one comes to know and to realize the truth of Christ that the Christlike character is established. Without such enlargement of truth there can be no growth; without it, indeed, there is starvation and death. And that there are more than a few of the members of the Church who are in just such a condition of poverty, no pastor will question. Instead of developing healthy Christian lives by living on the strong Word of God, after years of Church membership they still need to be fed on milk instead of meat. Much of every pastor's time is expected to be given to coddling and nursing a large number who are so ignorant of Christian truth and so devoid of Christian character that their loyalty and

happiness depend upon this sort of attention. And when the Church is possessed of numbers who are so devoid of spiritual life, it is not to be wondered at that she is wanting in spiritual power. Many there are who are so weak that they cannot resist any strong influence from without, and hence every "ism" that may chance to come finds a number of ready followers. So devoid of life and power, it is not to be wondered at that they fall in with every fad and fashion. But more plainly still, is this lack of power shown in the decreasing success of the Church in winning men to Christ. All the causes of this I am not here concerned to discuss. But certainly one great reason for the halting gait with which the Church is going on to the conquest of the world is the failure thoroughly to instruct in Christian truth, and thus develop in Christian character those who have been brought within her pale. In a word, the lack of proper emphasis upon and provision for thorough, systematic instruction results in widespread ignorance of the Word of God and Christian truth, and in the consequent want of larger life and power.

If, however, this is the situation, the Church cannot calmly accept it and consent for it to remain so. The Church of Christ has no right, so far as she can prevent it, to allow men and women to grow old within her fold ignorant of the principles of Christ and the Christian religion. If, as Jesus says, men are made free through the truth

learned by coming in contact with him, if they are transformed by the renewal of the mind, as Paul suggests, then the neglect of such instruction is a crime equaled only by indifference to the conversion of men. The Church must plan for the careful instruction of every one that takes her vows. This, to be sure, is no holiday task, but one requiring for its accomplishment considerable time and great outlay of energy. And yet the Church must not thereby be deterred from doing what is clearly a part of her divinely given work.

If now we turn to the consideration of the teaching force of the Church, our attention is directed at once to the great body of Sunday school teachers, more than a hundred thousand strong. What a mighty army of religious workers, and what a power lies here for the good of the Church! Next to the parents themselves, the Sunday school teachers have perhaps the position of greatest influence over the young life of the Church. To them is very largely intrusted the religious instruction of the Church. It is under their guidance that the Church of to-morrow secures its conceptions of Christian truth and duty. If the rank and file of the Church are ever to be instructed in the truths of Christ and the Christian religion, it must be through some such agency as the teachers of the Sunday school. Thus not only because they themselves are such a numerous host, but because of their relation to the young life of the Church, and



because of the character and importance of the work committed to them, the thousands of Sunday school teachers are of the utmost importance. Nothing short of the character of the ministry itself can be of more vital interest than the character and fitness of this mighty army of religious teachers. Poorly equipped teachers mean poor instruction, and poor instruction in Christian truth means poverty in Christian life.

It is not idle, therefore, to ask whether or not the teachers in our Sunday schools are sufficiently well furnished to do the work committed to them. Are they prepared to interpret and to teach the truths of the Bible and the Christian religion efficiently? If the prevalent opinion of both preachers and laymen is to be accepted as true, this question must be answered in the negative; there is only a small per cent of the great army of Sunday school teachers who are really efficient, only a small part of the Sunday school instruction is anything like satisfactory. And after some special investigation of this subject, the writer is constrained to believe that the general opinion is altogether too true. With regard to the first and more important prerequisite—namely, the possession of a genuine Christian experience—most of the teachers are doubtless well fitted for their work. When, however, it comes to a knowledge of the subject to be taught or of the methods of instruction, there is a most painful ignorance. All are supposed, for ex-

ample, to teach the Bible, and yet comparatively few can be found who have had any instruction in the Word of God other than that received in the Sunday school; and few likewise who have done any special reading in the literature on the Bible or the life of Christ. With respect to the doctrines of the Church, or the truths of the Christian religion, the situation is perhaps no better. Though an intelligent understanding of these is of great importance, not only for their own lives, but for those also who are to be taught, very few of the teachers possess such an understanding of them. And if there is so great lack of preparation with respect to the truths to be taught, the situation is scarcely better with respect to the best methods of doing it. Watch class after class, and see how pitifully weak much of the teaching is. Such certainly ought not to be the case. If, indeed, the Bible contains the supreme revelation of God to men; if the Christian religion sets before us the greatest truths about God and our relation to him, common sense would suggest that those who are so largely intrusted with instruction in these matters should be prepared to do their work well. The Word of God ought to be taught at least as well as the so-called secular studies are. And yet, as a matter of fact, the teachers in our present day public schools would be tolerated but a short while were they no better equipped for their work than the average teacher in our Sunday schools.

In what is here said there is not the slightest desire to minimize the advance that has been made in Sunday school work, nor to exaggerate the darker colors in the picture, but simply to state the facts as any one with eyes to see can see them. Neither is there any desire to attribute to the noble band of Sunday school workers the blame for the present unsatisfactory situation; on the contrary, the writer is in deep sympathy with the effort they are making. The superintendents realize and frankly confess that much of the Sunday school work is quite unsatisfactory, but they say: "What can we do? We can get no better teachers." The teachers too, many of them, know full well that they are not prepared to do the work as it ought to be done, but are gladly giving what they have, because others are not ready to contribute more. And for this, surely, they are not to be blamed. The blame for the situation—if indeed it should be so named—lies in the fact that as a Church we have been too slow to appreciate the full value of the Sunday school and to prepare well-trained workers for it. In our desire to increase the number of scholars, we have given too little thought to the qualification of teachers and the quality of their work. We believe that there is nothing more important for a man to know and to know thoroughly well than the will of God revealed in his holy Word, but in fact the conduct of the Church does not seem to say so. On the contrary, while for the teaching of Shakes-

peare we demand a teacher who has been himself well trained, for the teaching of the Bible, containing the profoundest life-giving truths, any one who has a willing mind will do. Accordingly strenuous effort has been made to provide adequate equipment for those who are to teach in the public schools, while the needs of the thousands of Sunday school teachers have as yet been but little considered. To say that the Church has her schools and colleges by the score does not meet the case, since these do not satisfy the special needs of the Sunday school teachers. In fact, so far as the writer is aware, no effort at all commensurate with the needs of the situation has been made to supply this need.\* Is it not high time, then, that the Church was devising some plan whereby to provide herself with capable religious teachers, and thus obtain a way for the better development of her people? For one, I can conceive of no higher duty nor more important task.

Thus far nothing has been said about the religious instruction of the ministry, but the matter is of too great importance to be lightly passed over. For every advance movement the ministry furnishes the natural doorway to the Church; through it the laity is most quickly reached and lifted up. Thus not only for its own sake but for the sake of

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\* Since these pages were sent to the printer our Sunday School Secretary, Dr. Atkins, has announced the Bible Teachers' Study Circle. It is a move in the right direction.

the Church at large the character of the ministry is of prime importance. Because through them is offered an opportunity of instructing and transforming those to whom they minister, the religious instruction of the ministers is doubly necessary. But the thorough training of the ministry is no less a duty than an opportunity. The various congregations are not free to choose their pastors, but must accept whomsoever the power of the Church appoints. The responsibility, therefore, is with the Church to see that the ministers sent are well equipped and capable of doing efficient service. If the congregations are under obligation to accept cheerfully those who may be sent, the Church is no less under obligation to send none but the best. She has no right to be indifferent to, nor satisfied with anything less than, the best equipment that can be supplied.

And the demand for enlarged equipment is to-day very great; the equipment of yesterday will not meet the present day needs. The minister stands now in a new world, and is surrounded with a new world-culture; it is a time of new problems, new difficulties, new opportunities. The rapid increase of education, and that, too, of a higher grade than formerly, among the laity of the Church, the quickened intellectual activity in every branch of knowledge, the constant spread of "Evolution," "Higher Criticism," "New Theology," and the problems arising from them, the host of practical



problems of a social, economic, and political nature, all of which, more or less, touch the minister, the enlarged outlook and responsibility of the Church of to-day—these are but a few of the many facts that call for a thoroughly trained ministry. There has rarely been a time, perhaps, so full of promise for the true prophet-minister, or preacher; but if he would rise to the need of the day, he must have a genuine message for men. Without a real heart experience, a thorough knowledge of the revelation of God in his Word, and a broad understanding of the complex forces in which men live to-day, he is but poorly furnished to be their guide. To the pastor, too, there is as great an opportunity as ever, but his task is becoming more difficult. If he would wisely shepherd the multitudes in our crowded cities, for example, he must have a knowledge not only of the religious conditions surrounding them, but also of the economic and social forces that are there at work. The work of the pastor is becoming more and more complex, and calls for more prolonged and thorough training. More notable still are the enlarging opportunities and demands for the teaching minister. Some of the larger and more successful Churches to-day have three ministers—a preacher, a pastor, and a teacher. And while in our Church there is not likely to be such an arrangement at any time in the near future, there is no doubt that the teaching function of the ministry is coming to be much more regard-

ed. The day is coming when the minister will spend less time in "serving tables," and give himself more to the careful instruction of the people in the truth of Christ and the Christian religion. But he that would teach must first himself be taught. If the minister would be able to direct his Sunday school teachers and his Church in systematic study of God's truth, he must be well furnished for the work. This means not only a genuine Christian experience, which under no condition must be minimized, but also thorough training in Christian truth. If there is any man in public life that needs to be well furnished in head as well as in heart, it is the minister most of all.

It may be granted, no doubt, that the ministry of the Church is better equipped to-day than ever before; but there is very much yet to be desired. The provision the Church is making does not, in fact, meet the demand. The colleges throughout the connection are ready to furnish the young preachers with collegiate training. Unfortunately, however, there are a large number who for one reason and another are not able to avail themselves to any large extent of this benefit. And it is to be noted further that, even to those who do attend college, the advantages of biblical and theological studies are not given. Such work is apart from the usual college course, and hence even the college-trained man is apt to be very deficient at this point—one, too, of the greatest importance for

the work of the minister. We have, of course, our seminary at Vanderbilt University to supply just this lack, and with the resources at its command it is doing a magnificent service for the Church. And yet only the few to-day are able to attend Vanderbilt and take the regular theological course. There are about two hundred young men who are admitted into the ranks of the ministry annually, while only about ten, perhaps, complete the theological course at Vanderbilt each year. Others, to be sure, go out from the seminary with a part of the course completed, but they go to their work with only partial preparation. In general we may say that only one in twenty of the young men going into the ministry of our Church today enters with anything like thorough training in the Bible and the doctrine and work of the Church. The Conference Course of Study, it is true, has sought to make good just this lack, and so far it has been of untold profit to the Church. Judged, however, by the present day demands and the improved educational methods of our time, this system is quite inadequate. In the first place, the *character* of the work prescribed is open to criticism. As an illustration, one may point to the undue emphasis upon Church doctrine as compared with the Word of God. The Old Testament is entirely ignored, and the New Testament is passed over with the reading—and frequently very superficial reading at that—of Wesley's "Notes on the New Testament;"

while on the doctrines of the Church the course prescribes Wesley's "Doctrinal Standards" (two years), Watson's "Institutes" (two years), Fletcher's "Appeal," Summers on Baptism, Pope's "Higher Catechism of Theology," and Hopkins' "Law of Love and Love as a Law." In the second place, there is a grave need for a better *method* of conducting the course. According to the usual plan, so far as the writer is aware, the young preachers read the books prescribed, and at Conference submit to a more or less rigid examination. The examination, no doubt, is a good thing, but by no means the thing the young preachers most need; what they need is instruction and inspiration, and these the system entirely fails to furnish. It is because of this failure that so many of the young preachers derive so little benefit from the course, and are only too glad to be quit of it. The Conference Course of Study, therefore, with all of its advantages, is not really supplying the needs of the young preachers. If the Church hopes to have the ministry well furnished for the increasing demands of to-day and to-morrow, she must resort to some other plan for the accomplishment of her purpose.

## II.

In seeking some plan by which to meet more fully the need for better religious instruction one is led at once to consider the method of modern university extension work. Begun at Cambridge,

*In the Southern Methodist Church.* 17

England, in a simple effort to extend some of its benefits to those who could not attend the university, the extension work has steadily enlarged its purpose and multiplied its agencies until it has become one of the important factors in present day educational work. The effort to give the benefits of education to those who are unfortunately shut off from college life is becoming more and more popular, and is proving of untold advantage to hundreds and thousands of men and women. Everyone, of course, is familiar with the great Chautauqua Movement, with its regular courses of study and its multitude of students. Though not, strictly speaking, university extension work, it has back of it the same purpose, and may be mentioned here as an illustration of the practicability of such work. Of a different character, and yet animated by the same general purpose of stimulating and guiding the study on the part of those shut off from such training as it can give, is the American Institute of Sacred Literature. By correspondence it is annually directing hundreds of students in their study of religious truth, and is rapidly extending its influence and power. A number of further illustrations might be given, but we must content ourselves with mentioning the University of Chicago, in connection with which the most ambitious steps have been taken in the direction of extension work. By means of individual correspondence, the organization of local classes, and the use of lecture



courses, the university is extending many of its benefits to hundreds and even thousands of students. The instruction by correspondence is not merely reaching students in most of the States of the Union, but even in many of the foreign countries is finding men and women anxious to avail themselves of its benefits. The success of the work indicates its practicability and prophesies a large future for the extension plan in education.

There will be some, no doubt, who will think that all such extension work is of a low grade; such, however, is not the case. That there is, perhaps, poor work done in this way no one will deny, since in this, as in instruction given at colleges and universities, there are many different grades. However, that such work may be of the highest value, there is abundant evidence to show. Dr. Charles Alexander McMurray, Instructor in Pedagogy, University of Chicago, has this to say: "During the past year I had the opportunity of comparing the work done by students who were taking the 'History of Education' Courses in the class room and by correspondence. I do not hesitate a moment in saying that those who did the work by correspondence did three times as effective work, and gained three times as much satisfaction for themselves as those who took the work in the class room. The correspondence student must carefully and thoughtfully sift out definite material for himself and give his opinion on it. This calls for

an amount of self-reliant effort that is among the best results of study." After being personally interested in correspondence work for twenty years, President W. R. Harper says: "It is without doubt true that in linguistics (I draw my illustration from the department with which I am personally connected, Hebrew and the cognate languages) the work done by correspondence is even better than that done in the class room. Students who come to us after a year of such work are better prepared than those who have taken it with us in the class room; and we do not mean to say that we are not doing our very best for our students in the class." These are the opinions of teachers; but the testimony of students is to the same effect. Mr. G. H. Gardiner, head master of the Donald Fraser Academy for Boys, Decatur, Ga., says: "My mental regeneration dates from the time that I began correspondence work under Dr. McMurray. This work is worth twice the expense involved, and is the most economical way of getting a university education." Rev. C. W. Scarritt, a member of the Southwest Missouri Conference, writes as follows: "My brief course in Hebrew through the correspondence department of the University of Chicago, was sufficient both to bring me a large practical return for my work and to convince me of the practicability and thoroughness of correspondence work in general. In its net results, correspondence work is certainly not far, if at all,

behind the work of the class room itself. I have learned with great gladness, from my own experience with it, of the possibility of a lifelong university course, with all the freshening and reviving influence which constant contact with a great center of thought brings, without the necessity of actual residence there." Another student, Rev. W. A. Massebeau, of the South Carolina Conference, is equally well pleased with the plan. He says: "During the past year I have been taking, by correspondence, the course which Dr. Goodspeed gives in the 'Life of Christ,' and I have found it both interesting and profitable. The method of work is well adapted to develop in the student self-reliance and self-activity. I have been so well pleased with the work I have done that I expect to be constantly engaged in some course of this kind."

Such testimonies as these, from both teachers and students—and the number might be largely increased—are quite sufficient to show that extension work is not only practical, but of great value. It is, of course, true that the plan is much better adapted to certain kinds of work than to others, and that all students are not equally capable of securing the best results from it. There is no question, too, but that the absence of personal contact with the living teacher and the association with fellow-students are losses in part unavoidable in this plan of work. But on the other hand, experience abundantly proves that it has also its very de-

cided advantages. It far surpasses resident work in cultivating self-reliance, thoroughness, and accuracy, while the cost to the student is far less than that of similar work in residence at a college or university. Certainly to those who cannot enjoy the advantages of resident study, university extension work offers the best advantages available.

Why, then, let us ask, could not our Church utilize this plan of work in order to meet in some measure the demands of more thorough religious instruction? If it succeeds anywhere, its success should be doubly great with the advantages the Southern Methodist Church has to offer. In the first place an advantage of considerable importance is furnished by the close organization of our connectional system which renders it comparatively easy to come in touch with both the preachers and the people throughout the whole connection. Thus the system furnishes an opportunity for organizing and conducting the work, which at other places must be supplied, so far as supplied at all, at much greater expense and trouble. In the second place the fact that every preacher is compelled to carry on a prescribed course of study for four years after joining the Conference affords an ideal opening for the introduction of such a system. Those who are taking this course of study—between eight hundred and a thousand each year—need just such instruction and inspiration as good university extension work would supply. Beginning

by trying to help the Conference undergraduates, the work might easily be enlarged so as to extend its benefits to ministers generally, to Sunday school teachers, and to all who care for such assistance. But again, there is a third fact which makes the adaptation of the extension system to our needs quite practicable. The Church has her Theological Seminary already established; it is well located and well manned. With comparatively slight cost extension work could be organized in connection with it, and thus great numbers be given the benefits which are at present limited to the few. And the fact that we have but one seminary would enable the work to be conducted in one unified and harmonious system. Every part of the Church could enjoy alike the best advantages that present day scholarship can afford. There is, in fact, no field so inviting for the use of university extension work as is to be found in the Southern Methodist Church. And the Church can by no means afford to neglect such an opportunity.

But how—the question may be asked—can the extension work be organized so as best to meet our needs? Without attempting to present a plan in all of its details, the question may be answered sufficiently for our present purpose by a few general suggestions: 1. In the first place, there can be no question but that the work should be organized in connection with Vanderbilt University, or rather



with the Biblical Department of Vanderbilt. On the one hand, the various colleges of the Church are not prepared to do the kind of work needed to be done; and if they were, the multiplication of such efforts would result only in rivalry and confusion. On the other hand, the Biblical Department of Vanderbilt University is well equipped for such work; and since it is only the seminary in the Church, it could conduct the work with uniformity and system. 2. Accordingly we would suggest, in the second place, that there be created at Vanderbilt University an "Extension Division of the Biblical Department" for prosecuting religious instruction throughout the Church. To be thus organized as an organic part of the seminary would be far better than to have created a separate school for this specific purpose. By such an arrangement the extension work would secure the wisdom and strength of an already well-established and well-furnished school, while the seminary itself would be greatly enlarged and broadened by such contact with the Church. 3. Such an arrangement, it is to be noted, would require some increase in the present working force of the seminary. It would be necessary for the management of the work to have a capable director, together with some clerical assistance; and for instruction there would be needed, perhaps, a small—though at first only a small—increase in the teaching force already at Vanderbilt. A part of the director's time could,

in the beginning, be given to instruction. In the future it is believed and hoped that the work would largely develop, but the plan of organization could grow according to the needs.

The general regulations of the extension division would need to be of such a character as not to restrict its benefits too narrowly, and at the same time not to encourage a low grade of work. For admission into the work of the division no entrance examination could be well required, but every applicant should present an exact record of all previous work done. Such a statement would be necessary in order that the instructor might best adapt his work to the needs of the individual student. If the previous preparation has been equal to that demanded for admission into the Biblical Department proper, the student could be classed as "regular," otherwise as "special." Both regular and special students should receive a certificate for every course satisfactorily completed, the required degree of excellence being the same, for example, as that demanded of resident students. And such certificates covering the Conference Course of Study should exempt any young preacher from the usual Conference examinations. The students who are registered as "regular"—that is, those who have had the required previous preparation—should, if at any time they so desire, be admitted as resident students of the Biblical Department and receive credit for the work done by correspondence.

Likewise to any one who desires a B.D. degree from Vanderbilt, in case his previous training has been such as to meet the special requirement of the university in such a case, correspondence work through the extension division should, to some extent, be credited. Such an arrangement would be of great advantage to the young ministers of the Church, without any loss to them or to the seminary.

The scope of the work must be determined by the needs of the situation and the provision which the Church may make to meet this need. According as such provision is made the work might be developed in somewhat the following way: 1. First of all, the work should include a thorough course of study covering the regular four years' Conference Course and adapted to the needs and situation of the Conference undergraduates. There is no question but that through the extension plan this prescribed work could be made far more valuable than it is as now conducted. With such a plan the student would receive not only careful instruction in the books prescribed, but also many helpful side lights into other literature of the subject, as well as the inspiration secured from constant connection with a good university. To the eight hundred or one thousand undergraduates this would indeed be no small benefit. 2. Beyond this the plan of work should include an advanced course in biblical and theological thought, and courses

in any subject that is found to be of special value to the ministry. Apart from the undergraduates, there are over five thousand ministers in active service in the Church. No doubt many of these, having completed the Conference Course, would now like to pursue more thoroughly some special line of work. The advanced course would encourage them to do so, and would furnish them the guidance and help of trained scholars. Not a few, perhaps, when once interested in the work, would make it convenient to complete their course in residence at Vanderbilt; while all would have the opportunity of carrying on indefinitely their systematic study. 3. But further, as soon as possible, the scope of the work should include courses specially adapted to the needs of the Sunday school teachers. Here may be mentioned, for example, general courses in Bible study and Christian doctrine in psychology and child study, in Sunday school organization and the science and art of teaching. The need for such instruction has already been abundantly indicated. That there is a demand for it is shown by the success of the Bible Normal College\* of Springfield, Mass., and the demand is rapidly growing. By some such plan as is here suggested, our Church might take an advanced step in providing trained teachers for the Sunday schools, and thus greatly improve the

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\* Recently removed to the Hartford Theological Seminary Hartford, Conn.

standard of religious instruction throughout the Church. No one of course would be sanguine enough to suppose that all of the one hundred thousand teachers would be thus reached; but if only a part could be helped, what a vast benefit it would be to the Church at large! 4. Thus the scope of the work would be sufficiently large to meet the needs of both preachers and teachers of the Church. It would also be so graded that the less advanced could receive its help as well as the college graduates. Both alike would have courses adapted to their wants. The work need not of course be limited absolutely to preachers and teachers, but by seeking especially to meet their needs the interest of the whole Church can best be served. Neither is it necessary that the work be limited to our Church; in fact, it might extend its benefits to preachers and teachers throughout the South; our first concern, however, is to furnish our own Church with well-trained preachers and teachers. Whatever is necessary to this end and possible to this plan of work may well be done.

There are several methods of work that might be utilized in making the extension division most largely helpful to the Church. 1. First, of course, and most important, is the correspondence with individual students. This would be done by means of printed lesson sheets containing necessary instructions for work, supplemented by personal suggestions and corrections by the teacher. 2. A



further plan which it might be possible to utilize is the organization of local study classes similar to the local Chautauqua Circles. This plan could perhaps be used to great advantage with the Sunday school teachers. In many places groups of teachers (and perhaps others) might be organized under the guidance of capable leaders through whom the necessary helps and instructions would be received from the central office. By this method the students would have the assistance of a leader and of fellow-students, while the cost to the individual student would be less than in the case of individual correspondence. 3. Again, if at any place there were a sufficient number who desired instruction in any given subject, they might organize a so-called "center," and have a course of lectures accompanied by class instruction on that subject. Thus the students in the local circles and all others who desired could avail themselves of scholars trained in special fields of thought or work. And if a group of such "centers" should coöperate, such advantages could be had without very great cost. Just this plan of work is being successfully operated by the University of Chicago, and a large number of towns in various States are reaping the benefits. 4. Another plan of work open to the extension division would be the conducting of institutes or Chautauquas for the benefit of preachers and teachers. Already a need and a desire for such a movement has shown itself in several of the Conferences.

And there is no reason why, so far as the means would allow, the extension division should not by judicious work of this kind greatly stimulate biblical and religious study and furnish to preachers and teachers in various parts of the connection opportunities which they otherwise could not enjoy. A few of the more favored ones can and do travel hundreds of miles to secure the inspiration and instruction that can thus be had; for the great majority, however, the case is otherwise. If they are to receive such advantages, these must be brought nearer home. There are hundreds of preachers and teachers located far away from the large centers of life who cannot get away from home to secure such benefits, but who by occasional contact with the great leaders of religious thought and life might be made anew in mind and soul. In part the extension division might seek to do this work. Thus by individual correspondence, by organization of local classes, by lecture centers, by institutes or Chautauqua gatherings, and by other methods which need not be named, the extension division might bring the benefits of a great university to the preachers and teachers throughout the Church.

The cost of operating such an extension division would depend, of course, upon the size of the work undertaken. If it be begun on a moderate scale, the expense need not be large. For the management of the work, as suggested above, there would be needed a director, and a certain amount

of clerical help. For instruction, a small addition to the present teaching force of Vanderbilt would perhaps be required; though with such assistance as the present instructors might be able to give, and with a part of the director's time also devoted to instruction, such addition, if any, would be inexpensive. Printing and general office expenses would of course amount to something, but the amount would not be great. On the other hand, by charging a fee of ten dollars for each nine months' course (and this amount would be very reasonable) the income, when once the work was well established, would largely, perhaps entirely, meet the outlay. If so, there would be needed only a few thousand dollars at most to put the work in operation, and to support it until such time as it had an income from its fees sufficient for its needs. Thus it may be possible to conduct the work upon a self-supporting basis. This means, however, to limit the work to that which brings in financial returns, and thus limit the scope and methods of the work. It may be necessary to begin the work in this way, but it should not end there. An undertaking with such unlimited possibilities for good to the Church should not be conducted on the *quid pro quo* basis, but with a truly missionary spirit. It should seek with unselfish devotion to carry its benefits to all, and especially to those who stand most in need. There are here and there a few more fortunate ones who have the advantage of thorough training, but

the great majority have not the time or the money to enjoy such benefits. To all such the extension division, with an enthusiasm worthy of the cause, should seek to extend a helping hand. But in order that this may be possible, it must have financial backing, and the more money it has the more freely can it give to the Church. With a reasonable endowment it could easily become one of the greatest factors in the religious instruction and development of the entire Church. It is doubtful, indeed, if any investment would have a wider field of usefulness and accomplish so much of permanent good.

### III.

In concluding this discussion it may not be amiss to present briefly a few of the reasons why the Church should undertake some such plan as that proposed. This will be in part a summary of much that has already been said.

The first reason lies in the fact already set forth—namely, the urgent need among all classes for more thorough religious instruction. If we consider the million and a half members, we find a large number of whom it may be said: “My people perish for lack of knowledge.” Because there is wanting a knowledge of God’s truth, there is a woeful lack of spiritual life and power. If we consider the teaching force of the Church, we are made to rejoice at beholding a mighty army one hundred thousand

strong, but are at once impressed with the urgent need of more thorough training. Well-trained teachers for the Sunday school! There is to-day within the Church no more imperative demand. And it is rendered imperative because with it is largely bound up the religious instruction of the Church to-day and to-morrow, and because such instruction must keep pace with the rapid strides in public schools if the Church would save herself from shame. If we turn again from the teachers to the preacher, a like demand for better equipment is felt. The situation within and without the Church, as well as the very nature of the calling itself, calls for men of the largest life, men of reality and depth of Christian experience and of broad and thorough training. The six thousand ministers in active service have been found to be good men and true; this can be said with perfect truth, but truth demands also the honest word that many of us are yet not well equipped in heart and mind to mediate the message of Christ to men. Without injustice to ourselves we may admit that the problems of the world, the success of the Church, the honor of the Master, alike call for a ministry with broader training and deeper life.

But some one will say, perhaps: "Yes, there is need enough for better religious training, but there are so few who realize their need sufficiently to do systematic study." If this is so, the fact should all the more arouse the Church to undertake the task;



it is a mighty reason for consecrating time and money to a campaign of religious instruction. Indeed, were there none willing to do such systematic study, the Church would not thereby be relieved of her responsibility. Because men are indifferent to their own conversion, the Church does not therefore cease to make her appeal to them; rather with redoubled energy she sets to work to arouse them to their need. And likewise the very indifference to religious instruction brings upon the Church all the greater duty to put forth strenuous effort to inspire them with a desire for larger truth. And all the more so since, if there is such indifference to the study of God's Word and to the truth of the Christian religion, and this indifference is allowed to remain, it will result in spiritual stagnation and death to the Church. But the supposition that all would be indifferent is not entirely true; no one will question that there are some who would welcome such an opportunity as the plan proposed would give. And though they are but few, they richly deserve the best effort the Church can make, and will well repay the trouble. If in a Sunday school here and there, for example, one teacher and only one could be found who cared to pursue a thorough course of training, these scattered ones would be of untold value. It is the exceptional, the well-trained worker here and there, that leads the way, and brings to the Church her largest success. Thus for the instruction of the few—if there

be but few—who would welcome such opportunities; as well as for the inspiration of those who are indifferent, there is urgent need for such a work. But after all, are there so few who would avail themselves of such advantages? The fact that large success has attended the efforts of the Chautauqua Movement, the American Institute of Sacred Literature, the University of Chicago, and other institutions doing such extension work, indicates that there are large numbers who are anxious for the benefits that can thus be had. And within our Church the case would not be otherwise. In numerous places the preachers are seeking in one way and another, by more or less inferior plans, to enlarge the equipment for their work. If to them were offered the advantages of such a plan as has been proposed, there would be a goodly number who would avail themselves of the benefits. If, however, the Church does not provide the opportunity, the more progressive among them will seek the advantages elsewhere, very much to the loss of the Church.

A yet further reason for undertaking the work that has been suggested lies in the fact noted above that the present effort of the Church is not meeting the needs; it is not arousing those who are indifferent, nor sufficiently aiding those who realize their want. With all of the multiplied agencies of the Church, the need of religious instruction among the million and a half members is by no means suf-

ficiently met. And again for the special training of the teaching force the present agencies of the Church are altogether inadequate. In fact, in the past there has been practically nothing done to meet the enormous needs of these hundred thousand Sunday school teachers. For the preachers the Church has her plan of religious instruction, and is doing more to meet their needs. And yet even to-day, as a matter of fact, nearly all the young men going into the ministry are depending for their special training upon the Conference Course of Study, and this four years' course, as at present conducted, falls very far short of furnishing the full equipment needed. Thus for the religious instruction of the preachers, the teachers, and the people at large, the present provision of the Church is quite inadequate; there is an urgent need for larger plans and more heroic endeavor.

Finally, not only the crying need of religious instruction, not only the earnest desire on the part of many, and the indifference on the part of more, not only the failure of the present plans to satisfy the desire of the one and to arouse the interest of the other, but also the superior value of the plan proposed, furnishes an argument in its favor. And with the possibilities at hand of such a plan the Church cannot afford to be inactive. The possibility and value of extension work is abundantly attested by teachers and students, and by the success it has achieved in other fields. The Southern

Methodist Church, with its close organization, its one well-established seminary, and its Conference Course of Study, furnishes an opportunity for this kind of work that is quite unique. The extension division can be organized and conducted with comparatively small cost, and yet the possibilities of its scope and methods of work are quite unlimited. It could inspire and instruct the eight hundred or thousand Conference undergraduates each year; it could offer to as many of the five thousand ministers as might desire them the benefits of advanced, systematic study; it could reach out toward the hundred thousand teachers and offer them the training suited to their work; and thus directly and indirectly it could measurably transform the religious instruction of the Church at large. To the poor as well as to the rich, to those who have but little training as to those who are already college-bred, to those who are regularly employed with other duties as to those also who have years for study—to all alike this plan makes possible the best religious instruction.

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